

## HAPPILY DIVORCED

It's so difficult looking into the eyes of a man you've spent 12 years with and telling him it's not working and that you don't want to wake up with him for the rest of your life. It's even more difficult when you have two beautiful children and everyone beseeches you to stay together "for the sake of the kids". But it's the most difficult because it is the death of a long nurtured dream. I grew up on a staple diet of Mills and Boons and fairy tales. The poetic language and marvellous imagery within those pages conjured up visions of a romantic idyll I was convinced would one day be mine. I was certain I'd meet a handsome prince charming who would sweep me off my feet and gallop off into the sunset with me. I was determined to have it be a 'happily ever after', and resolute never ever, ever, ever to be divorced like my parents.

Not that I disapproved of my parents going their separate ways at all, in fact, I truly believe that it's the best thing they ever did for themselves and for us. (Me and my younger brother Siddharth, that is). I guess that's largely due to the fact that I never ever saw them fight, or bad mouth the other in our presence. Neither did they believe in using us kids as emotional missiles to get at each other. The fact that they genuinely loved and most importantly LIKED each other was evident in the family holidays we all took together post their divorce, the endless nights we'd all be laughing and chatting till the wee hours of the morning and a point driven home and sealed with a kiss when my dad stayed with us when he came on his honeymoon with his second wife. I saw them as radiant, hardworking, wonderful individuals that were living their life without compromise.

But I was certain that MY marriage would be different. I wanted more than just a happy reality for myself. I wanted the "perfect" picture.

I believed compromise was the name of the game and from converting to Islam, to quitting my glamorous career, to playing a sit-at-home wife and mom I went the whole hog to make him happy and to "make it happen".

I met Farhan when I was just 20 years old. We couldn't have been any different. He came from a traditional Muslim background, whose parents had stayed together despite all odds, whereas I was the sexy wild child daughter to two Bohemian divorced individuals. My world was filled with glamour and fame while his was the serious world of business. The saying "opposites attract" couldn't have been truer for the two of us and after 4 happy, tempestuous, passionate years of courtship we sailed into the sea of matrimony when I was 24 and celebrated 8 fascinating married years together before we hit the rocky storms of divorce and our "happy ship" sank like the Titanic. Being a celebrity there is a lot of media speculation as to what went wrong in our marriage. Everyone wanted a "scoop". He beat, he cheated, or she cheated...", but we preferred to maintain a stoic silence on the issue because the last thing we wanted is for our kids see the two

individuals they love the most attacking each other. Hey! That is one of the main reasons I got divorced. I didn't want my kids growing up in a home filled with despondency, issues, fights and tears. It's so much more dignified and sensitive not to give explanations to all and sundry and merely laugh and retort, "the problem with so many marriages is that a lot of men who say, "I do'.... Didn't! ".. (contd)...

It is said that the quality of the reality you live in is not dependent on what happens to you, but your reaction and attitude towards it. Divorce is a fairy tale gone horribly wrong... But it's not the end of the real world. It's the death of a dream but the optimist in me saw it as a new beginning and I was also determined to end well what started well. What is the point in whining, bitching and anger? Why remember only the miserable and bad moments? Instead, why not thank each other for all the good moments and move on? Why remember only the bad aspects of a person? There must have been a lot of good too, for me to have loved him, married him and spent 12 years with him. No divorce is easy or happy but Farhan and I decided we were going to set a new paradigm for divorcees and that since the objective of divorce was to be happy apart than miserable together we would strive for the happiest friendship post divorce. Trust me it wasn't easy, but with consistent effort it is possible.

Ironically, we were granted our divorce on Valentine's Day. All the radio stations were buzzing with love songs, lovers were pronouncing their love for each other, and while the moral police were busy harassing couples in love, Farhan and I quietly walked down four floors of the court house hand in hand. I still remember the way we hugged each other, super tight, then got into different cars and headed in different directions. But then we both knew that divorce court was not the last we'd see of each other. Our kids unite us forever. The day I become grandma he becomes a granddad. When I turn aunt he turns uncle. We both celebrate their successes and are equally concerned when they're ill. We both love them deeply and have equal rights to and responsibilities towards them. Divorce can't change that. My father had made it clear to us when he and my mom were going their separate ways that they were divorcing each other, not me and my brother and we grew up positive, happy, successful, independent and emotionally stable... far from the "*bacche bigad jaate hain*" reality most Indians would have believe is the norm for children of divorced parents.

I've never seen happier kids than mine and they truly have the best of both worlds. They stay with me but drop into their dad's whenever they want. Every time I need to leave town for a couple of days they both go to him or my wonderful ex mom-in-law stays over at my place and takes care of them. Farhan and I meet up often over happy dinners with and without the kids. We share our lives openly with other. I'm the first to know about his girlfriends, his travels, new purchases and dreams, and vice versa. We console each other when relationships end and once when I got locked out of my home late at night, his home was my first choice to spend the night over at. This year on my birthday he joined me and the kids in Goa for a 3 day break where we swam together, laughed and drank into the late hours of the night much to the puzzlement of the *Junta* around. And

*Pooja Bedi*

no, we are clear that we are thrilled with our current equation and never want to get back with each other and risk losing the laughter and closeness we share today  
I thank God we had the foresight and maturity to convert something that had turned dreadful and traumatic into laughter and togetherness for everyone. I'm truly happy I met him, loved him, married him and divorced him. The 'perfect picture' is suddenly not important. It's just a picture. It's the happiness that your reality brings you, that matters. What can I say except that it's been a wonderful journey from being incomparable to incompatible... to once again being incomparable... as divorcees?